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Environmental Justice Communities Disappointed with Passage of Senate Dirty Energy Bills

Legislation passed by the Michigan Senate is ‘betrayal of environmental justice communities’

Yesterday, the Michigan Senate passed Senate Bills 271, 273, and 502. These bills will fail to adequately reduce greenhouse gas emissions while bringing more pollution to Black, Brown, Indigenous and poor communities by promoting dirty energy sources such as fracked gas, carbon capture and storage, factory farm and landfill gas, waste incineration, and more nuclear energy.

Throughout the legislative process, Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition and allies have issued written analysis, letters, and press releases with a clear, consistent message: there is no climate win without environmental justice. However, these interventions have been ignored. Legislators and environmental groups who promoted these bills consistently dismissed, ignored, and ran roughshod over input from EJ communities, while bending over backwards to appease corporate polluters like DTE and Consumers Energy. Once again, these actors proved unwilling to stand with Environmental Justice communities, who bear the brunt of climate change impacts, unaffordable energy, and industrial pollution.

Far from remediating environmental injustices or taking bold action to tackle the climate crisis, this Senate package provides a lifeline for dirty energy and investor-owned utilities while sacrificing the health and wellbeing of impacted communities.

Specific areas of concern include:

- Including fossil gas in the definition of “clean energy”
- Setting a weak 15% renewable energy target by 2029 that will prevent Michiganders and our economy from benefiting from true renewables like wind, solar, and battery storage
- Allowing utilities to increase their rates to pay for dangerous, costly, and toxic projects like more gas power plants with carbon capture, dirty hydrogen, landfill and factory farm gas, and new nuclear power
- A carve-out for incinerators that would allow continued harm to public health by burning trash in impacted communities
- Numerous loopholes for utilities to evade and elude regulatory compliance, including:
  - Allowing the use of unbundled Renewable Energy Credits
  - Double-counting energy waste reduction credits toward renewable energy
  - Carve-outs for industrial energy customers and utilities’ Voluntary Green Pricing programs that falsely inflate the proposed renewable energy standard
- Exclusion of community solar and distributed generation programs that would spur renewable energy in low-income and disadvantaged communities.

Individual organizational reactions below:

**Statement from Ahmin Maxey, Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition Executive Director:**

“SB271 is a betrayal of Black, Brown, Indigenous and frontline communities throughout Michigan who for generations have contended with the worst effects of climate change and pollution. Our communities will not accept a dirty energy package that allows greedy corporations to continue to poison our air and water and call it ‘clean energy.’ We call on our legislators to reject the influence of investor-owned utilities like DTE and Consumers Energy, who clearly had a hand in drafting these unacceptable bills, and listen instead to community voices that have long advocated for environmental justice priorities such as banning political contributions from investor-owned utilities and ensuring that all Michiganders have access to reliable, affordable, 100% renewable energy by 2035.”

**Statement from Jesse Deer In Water of Citizens’ Resistance At Fermi Two (CRAFT), and Steering Committee Member of MAJIC**

“There can be no truly clean energy future as long as nuclear power is a part of it. It is not clean or renewable, and has been long opposed by those who bear the brunt of this industry. This is a fine example of top-down hierarchical power structures that continue to ignore and oppress impacted and marginalized peoples and groups. With thousands of abandoned radioactive uranium mines in the country and rising cancer rates around Fermi 2, nuclear power is a resource-limited dirty energy process that should be replaced with truly clean pollution-free energy as soon as possible. This process must be just and include those most impacted and vulnerable.”

**Statement from Andrea Pierce, Steering Committee Member of the Grassroots Sub Caucus of Michigan Environmental Justice Caucus**

“As Environmental Justice organizations, we unequivocally reject these bills for their lack of ambition as well as the dangers they pose to our communities. It is outrageous to include technologies that either fail to reduce emissions or, even worse, create additional pollution
burdens in Environmental Justice communities. We know that Governor Whitmer wants a “win” on climate change. Let us be clear: there is no winning on climate change without Environmental Justice. This bill package will perpetuate the deep racial, social, and ecological injustices of the dirty fossil-fueled energy system. We are asking our legislators to oppose it when it gets to the House.”

The Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition (MEJC) works to achieve a clean, healthy, and safe environment for Michigan residents most affected by inadequate policies. We build power and unity within our community, so we all can thrive. www.michiganej.org